

# CULTURAL ECOTOURISM AS AN INDIGENOUS MODERNITY

## Namibian Bushmen and two contradictions of capitalism

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### **Introduction**

So-called indigenous<sup>1</sup> people, such as the Bushmen of Namibia, are often seen as ‘traditional conservationists’. Based on their indigenous knowledge of nature, they are frequently imagined and positioned as primordial people who belong to nature and therefore protect it better than anyone else. This kind of representation also creates the impression that they are still in need of development, as if they are ‘not yet modern’. Today, such images flourish in what I call ‘cultural ecotourism’ and its marketing strategies. Such cultural ecotourism also generates an expansion of neoliberal capitalism to the world of indigenous people, which creates two contradictions. First, through ecotourism, ‘authentic’ indigenous people earn money and adapt to an ‘inauthentic’ modern life in a capitalist world. To do so, it is necessary that they remember or reinvent their ‘traditions’ and thereby continue to act as ‘authentic’ people of nature. Second, ecotourism is supposed to ‘develop’ indigenous people, but the values of this ‘development’ are based on neoliberal capitalism, the system that creates many environmental problems today. Therefore, ‘developing’ people based on capitalist values might add to global environmental pressure. At first glance, these contradictions might create the impression that indigenous people are victims of a more dominant political economy, due to their limited economic possibilities. Yet, in cultural ecotourism, they can also take up a more active part in modernisation, creating ‘indigenous modernities’ in which indigenous people bend aspects of modernisation to their own benefit and strengthen their indigenous image.

‘Nature’ is often the main attraction of so-called ‘ecotourism’. Some authors, such as Crist (2004) or Kidner (2000), argue against a social construction of nature, while others believe that there is no ‘single nature’, but many different constructions of what nature is or should be (see e.g. Cater 2006: 25). Using an interpretative approach in this chapter, I explore the indigenous ‘people of nature’ – in particular the Bushmen of Namibia – who play a crucial role in cultural ecotourism. Although ecotourism has been given many definitions, in general

it can be seen as a type of alternative tourism or nature-based tourism, in which serious attention is paid to environmental and local concerns, as opposed to conventional mass tourism (Cater 1994: 3–4; Fennell 2003: 18). The term is often used in conservation literature and misapplied to nature-based tourism, but ecotourism encompasses a much wider set of environmental concerns on accommodation and local ownership, while nature-based tourism is a form of conventional tourism (Brockington *et al.* 2008: 134–135). Therefore, the term can lead to confusion and is used and abused in the tourism and travel industry (Cater 1994: 3–4).

My aim here is to show how ecotourism has become a concept that is dominated by neoliberal capitalist ideologies, actions (e.g. consumption), values, and institutions originating in the West (see e.g. Cater 2006: 25; West and Carrier 2004), which has a big influence on the way in which local societies are changing, and how these indigenous people respond to these processes. I suggest that indigenous groups have not only become victims of more powerful forces that are shaping their environment, such as colonialism, capitalism, and modern technology; they are also agents who are actively engaging in the contemporary modern environment. To be able to do so, they sometimes embrace their indigenous status as ‘authentic’ and/or marginalised people. This means that indigenous societies are neither traditional, in the sense of ‘authentic’, nor modern, in the sense of ‘inauthentic’, but hybrid.

My findings are based on ongoing visits to the Bushmen of southern Africa since 1999. The first time I stayed with them as an anthropology student doing ethnographic fieldwork for six months in 1999; and later, from 2002 to 2007, I lived among the Hai//om in Tsintsabis, northern Namibia. I was then working on a community-based ecotourism project called Treesleeper Camp (see Hüncke and Koot 2012; Koot 2012, 2015, submitted). Later, based on six months of fieldwork in 2010, I studied three Namibian Bushmen groups (and one South African group) for a PhD dissertation (Koot 2013).

### ***Cultural ecotourism and neoliberal capitalism***

What makes ecotourism particularly interesting is that there is a general tendency to regard it as a ‘good’ phenomenon, in which nature is conserved, cultures are preserved, and simultaneously the people of these cultures are developed (see e.g. Cater 2006; West and Carrier 2004). Concerning the conservation of nature, recent evidence shows that the global conservation of wildlife species can be supported by ecotourism activities (see e.g. De Vasconcellos Pegas *et al.* 2015), although animals can also be disadvantaged, for example, because ever more ‘ecotourists’ join boat tours which affect the stress levels of whales and dolphins, and can even kill them (Cressey 2014).

In this chapter, however, I focus on ecotourism’s conflation with ‘ethnic tourism’, ‘indigenous tourism’ or ‘cultural tourism’, because I look specifically at the role of indigenous people, who tend to be seen as part of nature – something I have previously dubbed ‘cultural ecotourism’ (Koot 2013: 49–52). Therefore, the use of ‘ecotourism’ in this chapter is focused on indigenous peoples’ engagement in tourism, in association with nature activities.

For example, when I worked at Treesleeper Camp, we used solar energy, focused on the contemporary and traditional culture of the local !Xun and Hai//om Bushman groups and built a campsite in a beautiful natural setting (see also Koot 2012). Although the project was initially aimed at the economic development of the local community (with serious consideration for the natural environment), various companies in the Namibian tourism industry were eager to promote it as an ecotourism destination. In a way this made sense, because all important elements of ecotourism were there up to a degree; it was only our

initial focus that was on the ‘community-based’ aspect. The vicinity of ‘pure nature’ – in this case, the Etosha National Park which is also an important part of the original Hai//om habitat – might have added to the ‘ecotouristic image’ of Treesleeper Camp. Moreover, the image of the indigenous Bushmen as people of nature should not be underestimated (see also Koot 2015).

Tourism in general is an exponent of contemporary neoliberal capitalism and helps to spread its values (Duffy 2013). This also applies to cultural ecotourism, which creates various problems that are associated with capitalist development, such as the creation of ‘inauthenticity’ and poverty. These problems are then often addressed using capitalist mechanisms (Fletcher and Neves 2012).

Instead of earlier state-led types of capitalism that were focused on welfare, today’s neoliberal capitalism concentrates power more than ever in the capitalist class, which creates structural impoverishment for most people outside this class (Kotz 2003). Nevertheless, the rise of neoliberal capitalism is often presented as “a gospel of salvation . . . to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered” (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 2), neglecting the increasing global imbalances in incomes. This can happen because many people assume that marginalisation can be eradicated through the ‘trickling down’ of finances in a free market. Private enterprises and entrepreneurial initiatives are believed to be crucial to create wealth through an increase in production (Harvey 2005), which means that consumption, industrialisation, and extraction need to be increased as well.

From this point of view, development based on neoliberal capitalist ideas, values, and assumptions throws a very different light on the ‘eco’ in ecotourism. The two contradictions that I describe in this chapter, one about authenticity and the other one about development, often stay hidden behind the positive messages of ingenious marketing rhetoric about the advantages that ecotourism brings to develop these marginalised communities and keep them authentic. Today, ecotourism, with its strong focus on wildlife, has become an important element in the rhetoric of nature conservation, in which a business approach dominates (Spenceley 2008: 180).

### *Indigenous modernities*

Today, indigenous peoples have also become dependent on modern means of production, communication, and transportation, such as rifles, radios, and motorised vehicles (Robins 2003; Sahlins 1999). They can acquire such products with money from payments, wage labour, and so on. This integration of industrial technologies and systems into indigenous cosmologies is what Marshall Sahlins has referred to as “indigenous modernities” (1999: vi–vii):

Many of the peoples who were left for dead or dying by dependency theory we now find adapting their dependencies to cultural theories of their own. Confronted by cultural processes and forms undreamed of in an earlier anthropology, such as the integration of industrial technologies in indigenous sociologies and cosmologies, we are not leaving the twentieth century with the same ideas that got us there.

*(Sahlins 1999: vi)*

For the Bushmen, because of the remoteness of the areas where many live, cars and cell phones are among the most valuable modern items that they embrace today which enable them to continue some ‘authentic’ indigenous practices, albeit altered. Cars, for example,

are being used to distribute elephant meat to nearby settlements, thereby being a helpful tool for the social element of hunting. This means that Bushmen do not necessarily create a first response to the encroachment of the capitalist world and its ideas in which they try to imitate 'us'; they can also use consumer products and capitalist ideas as indigenous modernities to strengthen their identity as themselves, to become *more* 'authentic'. For this, 'our' commodities can be helpful, but people are selective and can transform usage of these commodities for themselves. Western goods can be used to develop their own ideas, so that the indigenisation of Western objects takes place. In this way, many non-industrial people have not entered the capitalist world economy as passive objects of exploitation, but as active agents (Sahlins 1992).

In what follows, I provide in-depth descriptions of two contradictions of capitalism in cultural ecotourism. First I explain a contradiction about the search for authenticity; and second, I describe a contradiction about the idea of development. In these sections I also analyse my own fieldwork findings from cultural ecotourism among Namibian Bushmen. I then wrap up by relating both contradictions to Sahlins' concept of indigenous modernities.

### **The two contradictions**

In 2010, I held an interview with a development fieldworker from a non-governmental organisation (NGO) about (eco)tourism among the southern African Bushmen (or San). Having worked with Bushmen for decades, she explained to me that

For us with a Western background and coming from a capitalist mindset, you see so clearly the potential of something that can be done but you don't see the community networks that exist around it. And those community networks is their [the Bushmen's] economy. We don't see that economy, we just see "Oh, but you can get much more money" but you don't see how that economy imposed on their economy is going to destroy the fibre of the other one . . . Tourism has in its core the force of destruction [of] what it is that we want to sell. So you want to sell this product, the beauty of it, while the capitalist world and culture and means that we bring in that they also want, that has the potential of destroying what we try to sell. How do you toss that game? . . . It has positive elements of self-esteem and cultural knowledge, preservation and also income-generation, but it has in its core . . . the people fear that it keeps them back, it keeps them who they were and they want to move on.

*(Koot 2010: fieldwork interview)*

In the above quote, two contradictions of neoliberal capitalism are revealed that come about through the implementation of cultural ecotourism among the so-called indigenous peoples.

#### ***The first contradiction: authenticity***

The search for authenticity is an important characteristic of tourist modernity and is based on the belief that authenticity was lost somehow and only exists in the past or in other, faraway places. Modernity, with its Western tourists and dominant capitalist values, is associated with inauthenticity (Goffman 1959; MacCannell 1976), which implies that the search for authenticity can serve as a remedy against modernity's maladies: this often leads

to the commodification of indigenous cultures; they are reduced to a good or product with a financial exchange value (Cohen 1988).

Today, the Bushmen are often still considered an icon of nature, while in reality they have gone through a brutal history and live under harsh and marginalised conditions. The perpetuation of their image as people of nature is also called the Bushman myth (Gordon and Douglas 2000), which creates the first contradiction that I discuss here. It refers to the role that many indigenous people (have to) play when engaging in cultural ecotourism. The ecotourists' search for 'authenticity' not only involves 'authentic nature', but also the 'authentic people of nature'. This means that the local people are supposed to live closer to nature, while in reality they are an important tourist attraction. In fact, by acting authentic, the local people have taken up a position in a capitalist system in which they have become (a part of) an ecotourism product. In the above quote, the NGO worker refers to this, for example, by mentioning the "destruction" of what "we want to sell" (the product) and that "it keeps them who they were and they want to move on". However, this does not necessarily mean that without tourism, Bushmen would be left 'untouched'; it is only one such influence, and therefore should be seen as a phenomenon of the wider political economy.

In cultural ecotourism, indigenous people are often characterised as the ethically superior, wise protectors of the land who can function as an example for non-indigenous people, something that David Fennell (2008) calls the "myth of indigenous stewardship". For example, a former client of Treesleeper Camp, Nomad Africa Adventure Tours, would explain that the Bushmen "have much to offer our modern way of living in terms of a sustainable existence with nature" (Nomad Africa Adventure Tours 2015). However, if the ecological impact within traditional societies was often low, this is not necessarily because of conservation-mindedness, but it should also be attributed to local conditions, such as low population density, the absence of a market, and poor technology (Fennell 2008; see also Ingold 2000: 68), conditions that have now undergone profound changes and continue to do so.

So in the marketing of cultural ecotourism, local people are often 'naturalised' for tourist consumption and are shown in photographs, for example, in traditional dress with the local flora and fauna (Brockington *et al.* 2008; Igoe 2010; Koot 2015). Their mythical images are being sold and used in advertising, not least in ecotourism. Often, that which is sold does not have anything to do with the actors, but with the encouragement of consumption for profit. Ironically, the people used for this advertising may well be unable to afford the products themselves (Tomaselli 2005: 136). Western idea(l)s about nature and the people living in nature are enacted through the free market, creating products based on the tourists' consumptive needs. In this way, tourists spread 'inauthentic' capitalist ideas, values, and the market system instead of supporting 'authentic' indigenous practices (West and Carrier 2004), or the 'preservation' of these cultures.

Such marketing leads to encounters between hosts and guests, in which there are various ideas about what is authentic (Van Beek 2007: 88). These encounters have often resulted in the villagers' adoption of the tourists' expectations, based on the tourists' pre-existing image of the villages, leading to performances with little resemblance to local traits, original rituals, or normal conduct (Tomaselli 1996: 102). Therefore, tourists get to see a 'staged authenticity' ('front regions' or frontstage), as opposed to 'back regions' (backstage) where the hosts' lives take place (MacCannell 1976). This staged authenticity is constructed by the hosts who represent the 'other' they are searching for. It seems as if the attraction the Bushmen hold for tourists is the focus on their (ascribed) identity as the primitive others of a pristine fantasy,

semi-officially marked and marketed as being a scarce resource, off the beaten track, almost extinct, and so on (Garland and Gordon 1999: 271; Guenther 2002: 51–52).

For example, when I met a Dutch tourist in the Nyae Nyae Conservancy, Namibia, he explained that he was looking for authenticity and spirituality among the Bushmen. After watching three movies about Bushmen including the influential *The Great Dance* (Foster and Foster 2000), he had become inspired by the Bushmen’s “spiritual experience of nature”. To find this, he contacted the director of *The Great Dance*, who recommended him to “go to [the Ju/’hoansi of] Tsumkwe, because there it is accessible and according to his feeling it would be *more authentic*” (my italics). This quote shows how some people tend to consider some Bushmen to be ‘more authentic’ than others, based on their preconceptions of what is authentic and what is not. In general, the Ju/’hoansi of the Nyae Nyae Conservancy in Namibia and the Dobe Area in Botswana are often regarded as the ‘pure’ or ‘real’ Bushmen, based on historical and anthropological accounts (Koot 2013: 60). In this line, a tour guide at Treesleeper Camp explained that during the activity of a village tour, they show the tourists !Xun<sup>2</sup> houses. She explained that “[t]he village tour is just a show . . . One of the !Xun houses is not exactly built in the style as these people used to build houses . . . They also do not always speak !Xun, but I as a guide just say that they do” (cited in Hüncke and Koot 2012: 683). As Garland and Gordon (1999: 280) stated, what counts as authentic has no fixed content and even though cultural characteristics, such as ethnic originality and historical stasis are conflated with authenticity, these are not the same thing. Indeed, the same Dutch tourist explained that he was “more interested in their [the Bushmen’s] own roots instead of what they have taken over from the West”. It is this search for authenticity that can explain why tourists often do not want to be tourists; it is because they *are* the West, the modern, the ‘inauthentic’.

Altogether, this led the Hai//om manager of Treesleeper Camp to wonder rhetorically: “What do tourists want to see? Do they want to see how Bushmen [are]? Should we change because of tourists or should tourists accept how we are?” (cited in Hüncke and Koot 2012: 682). In many cases, ecotourism activities lead indigenous groups to (re)invent their traditions, to create commodities for the tourist market, often because the tourist market becomes a way of facilitating the ‘preservation’ of the cultural traditions that would otherwise perish (Cohen 1988: 382). For Bushmen, cultural ecotourism is a potential strategy for generating income and regaining control over the production, reproduction, and packaging of their own image (Suzman 2001: 135). A clear example of a commodified aspect of Bushmen culture is the trance or healing dance. Today, Bushmen engage in dancing work and expect to be paid for it, except when healing their own family members. As dance has gained monetary value, it has become a product and a service to be paid for by their own (ill) community members and by ‘outsiders’, mostly tourists. The latter types of dance have changed a lot compared to the original and are mostly devoid of any curing (Guenther 2005). This shows how Bushmen’s relations, with fellow Bushmen too, are evolving under the influence of tourism as an exponent of capitalism.

So simply by their attendance, cultural ecotourists impose neoliberal capitalism on the local cultures that are thereby commodified. Within capitalism, this is covered under a “psychological fix” (Fletcher and Neves 2012: 66); marketing isolates the mysterious indigenous cultures in the tourists’ minds. This happens as if the indigenous people are excluded from the problems of the ‘modern’ world. Instead of accepting a situation in which local cultures are turned into products because of the tourists’ presence, the creation of an image that is mysterious, harmless, and authentic protects the tourists from potential feelings of guilt (Fletcher and Neves 2012: 65–66).

In this process, ethnic commodities become contradictory in the sense that, seen from the conventional assumptions about value and price, the appeal of such commodities lies in the idea that they resist the rationality of ordinary economics based on neoliberal capitalism. However, this does not mean that those who commodify their identities will always remain dupes of the market, although it might seem to be this way at first. There are numerous examples in which they enter into their own small businesses based on the commodification of their culture, in which there is a good level of tactical and critical consciousness (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 20–27). When Hobsbawm (1983) wrote about invented traditions, he stated that those inventions may initially be seen as a simplification of traditional cultures, but that they are important cultural responses to the forces of modernity. Today, ever more Bushmen are taking an active part in the process of imaging (Tomasselli 1999: 131–132). To distinguish themselves, some indigenous people compromise with the dominant groups and their ideas. In many cases, they have no problem claiming to be the best ecologists in the world (Fennell 2008; Sahlins 1993), because this image has become a commodity.

### ***The second contradiction: development***

The second contradiction refers to the development of the local, indigenous people, described in the quote from the NGO worker at the beginning of this section as achieved by “self-esteem and cultural knowledge, preservation and also income-generation”. Indeed, in ecotourism, a type of development is promoted that is essentially based on values and assumptions from capitalism. Ecotourism is a mainly Western-centric approach (e.g. Cater 2006: 25), resulting in values from the capitalist world, such as cash and commodities, which cross a permeable barrier and are converted into values of ‘traditional economies’ that are often based on sharing (Lee 2005: 24–25). Contemporary neoliberal capitalism has been responsible for most of the recent global environmental decline through its support of consumerism and related resource extraction and industrialisation. Therefore, the contemporary global domination and spread of neoliberal capitalism should be critically analysed, especially in relation to ecological ‘solutions’ such as ecotourism.

Development in ecotourism takes place based on a rhetoric of socio-economic values that are inherent in neoliberal capitalist individualism (West and Carrier 2004: 485), while the extraction and industrialism that it supports have often proven to be disastrous for the environment. By attaching financial value to nature and culture, development of indigenous people through ecotourism supports the promotion of an unsustainable livelihood that is based on an increase of consumption (see e.g. Cater 2006: 34–35). This shows the penetration of market forces into their small-scale, subsistence, and exchange-based economies (Lee 2005: 16). In development discourse, Western economic terms are used as being necessary for concepts such as “efficiency” and “economic growth”, that are rarely justified but are automatically assumed to be based on “economic correctness” (Ferguson 2006: 77–79). The focus of institutions such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is on competitive advantages in Africa, which are there to be utilised efficiently so that economic growth and, as is assumed, development, can take place (Ferguson 2006: 77–79).

Under this influence, the current identity of the Bushmen in ecotourism has gained a double nature, in which they are both the primitive (authentic) cultural objects as well as modernising producers of tourism, thereby creating hybridity. This hybridity has led to a sometimes inconvenient “double vision” among NGOs (Robins 2001): on the one hand, they promote Western values and ideas, such as democracy and income-generating activities,

to help indigenous peoples socialise into becoming 'modern citizens'. On the other hand, however, they promote the preservation of an 'authentic' culture based on traditional leadership, cultural survival, and the promotion of Bushmen languages. In Western development thinking by the state, donors, and NGOs alike, there is a tendency to continue the artificial divide between modernity and tradition, instead of recognising this hybridity (Robins 2001: 843–844; Robins 2003: 279–280; Sahlin 1999: vi–vii). Ecotourism, with its strong focus on authenticity and development, strongly resembles this double vision of NGOs and donors, which is no surprise when realising that ecotourism is often supported and instigated by these actors. This is partly also due to the dependency of NGOs on Western donors who, in some cases, promote the image of homogeneous and communal authentic people, while at the same time advocating capitalist and democratic values to them (Robins 2001: 845–851), such as individualism, to imitate the Western lifestyle and to 'become like us'. However, this does not necessarily mean that Bushmen are only passively 'accepting' their development, acquiescing in the imposition of modernist values and ideas. Quite the contrary: as 'indigenous' people, they grapple with modernity based on a history and culture that is classified as poor and marginalised. Bushmen, as indigenous people, are not only "objects for tourist consumption; as modernizing subjects, they must also be seen as producers, agents in the production and marketing of tourist artifacts and experiences" (Garland and Gordon 1999: 275). As modern producers of tourism, indigenous peoples have become a new genre in tourism that emphasises not only their cultural difference from Westerners, but also the ways in which they are similar, behaving as willing producers and consumers in capitalism. The first label of authentic Bushmen 'others' locates them almost automatically outside modern time and space, and often in nature. The second, modernist label posits them as active agents and participants in the tourism industry from which they choose to benefit by commodifying themselves through commercial and legal transactions. Interestingly, in cultural ecotourism, both discourses co-exist comfortably and sometimes their status as 'others' is the very thing that makes their modern role possible at all; it is the 'authentic other' that they ultimately have to sell (Garland and Gordon 1999: 275–279).

Some advantages of modernity and development are embraced by the local poor (Robins 2003: 280–284), whereas others are utterly rejected. According to some researchers, the commodification of culture could be a panacea for development, whereas others worry that it will exacerbate or even reinvent long-standing behaviours and relations of extraction and inequality (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 140–143). For example, the Treesleeper Camp manager explained that when the NGO NACOBTA (Namibia Community-Based Tourism Assistance Trust) supported the project with marketing, they misrepresented the project by using a picture which he felt did not do any good for the project. Nevertheless, he was later able to set up additional marketing activities through donor funding, because he followed a course on marketing, benefiting from capitalism to represent their indigenous project in their own way (Koot 2013: 238). In another example from the 1990s, the Intu Afrika lodge advertised Bushmen at their lodge as the last of their kind and few in number, while the stories told to the tourists about them were fanciful (Garland and Gordon 1999: 276–277). However, they lived in a village about two kilometres from the tourists and only dressed up in traditional outfits for tourist performances (Guenther 2002: 49). The hybrid, non-local, and in-migrated community was advertised as having traditional skills, but lacked the basic training they required to turn their skills into income generation. Intu Afrika and the tourists served as benevolent do-gooders, taking the Bushmen out of their primitive, disempowered, and traditional state (Garland and Gordon 1999: 277). Nevertheless, for the Bushmen at Intu Afrika, working there was not a choice as they felt pressured into it by their poverty and

unemployment. They complained of social tensions, unfulfilled promises of land acquisition, and a tourist levy by the owners. Moreover, the labour conditions led some workers to explain that they were just a duplication of those found on commercial farms (Sylvain 2002: 1080–1081; cf. Koot 2016).

In my fieldwork I also experienced that it is very common to emphasise the economic importance of tourism for Bushmen, so that tourists will be encouraged to consider themselves as helpful agents in the Bushmen's process of development. This happens in guidebooks and brochures and at guest farms, lodges, NGOs, and among tour operators. For example, I have myself written marketing texts about Treesleeper Camp in which I explained that this tourism project "will stimulate the small scale economy" (Treesleeper Camp 2015); and the Nomad tour operator mentioned above explains that tourism provides "much needed funding for the conservation of the area and their way of life" (Nomad Africa Adventure Tours 2015). Interestingly, at Nomad it is even assumed that funding is now a necessity for Bushmen to continue "their way of life", instead of an outside influence that will, for good or bad, change the local dynamics.

However, there are tourists who seek an authentic experience in which they are willing to accept that the tourist product itself does not necessarily have to be authentic. Tourism then becomes a quest for authenticity, in which the tourists are looking for an ideology that enables them to see their modern selves as authentic, even if the Bushmen are clearly not (Garland and Gordon 1999). Tourists might easily regard Bushmen who are engaged in tourism as primitive and modern at the same time, halfway through an imagined development process. This ideology of the tourist is the one of Western socio-economic development, which encompasses Bushmen as both being and becoming (developed). In this way, tourists can consider themselves patrons of the Bushmen instead of exploitative consumers. This authentic quest then denies the historic circumstances that have contributed to the current marginalised status of Bushmen, while positioning them below the fully modern status of the developed tourist (Garland and Gordon 1999: 281–283).

In this process, what is a benefit to one is a loss for another, and individuals may change and experience new circumstances. In many cases, the costs are regarded in terms of natural resources; and the benefits in terms of development (projects), training, and opportunities to join the market economy (Brockington *et al.* 2008: 73–74). In this discourse, cultural ecotourism is often regarded a kind of 'fair trade tourism', based on a so-called "social fix" (Fletcher and Neves 2012: 65), which suggests that local communities, who were often unjustly treated in the past, are now developed into equal world-citizens who receive proper wages and good treatment. Through marketing, rhetoric, and certification systems, tourism mediators become the power holders, negotiating between the indigenous people and the outside world. For these mediators, it is important to show that they 'do good', thereby increasing the value of their business by using rhetoric about fair trade and assumed economic trickle-down effects (see also Cater 2006: 26). Furthermore, by being an ecotourist, instead of just an 'ordinary' tourist, tourists themselves show that they act in a socially responsible way through the support they generate for the development of marginalised indigenous peoples.

## **Conclusion**

A dual nature exists in cultural ecotourism, in which indigenous people, such as the Bushmen of Namibia, are positioned as authentic and modern at the same time. As an exponent of neoliberal capitalism, this type of tourism creates contradictions, and environmental

anthropologists doing research on ecotourism should be aware of those and the dynamics they create. The first contradiction is the tourists' search for authenticity, while the tourists' presence is itself an imposition of values and ideas from the modern capitalist world; it makes the authentic people inauthentic. The second contradiction is the development of the indigenous people, which is an essential element of ecotourism. Because development tends to be focused on Western, capitalist, modern ways of life, it creates consumers when successful. This creates an increase of consumption and therefore supports polluting and unsustainable phenomena such as extraction and industrialism. Thus, cultural ecotourists can either look for the authentic Bushmen or, in case they follow an ideology that is focused on development, for the marginalised Bushmen. In the latter case, development is mostly based on the Western ideology of economic growth that is supposed to 'trickle down' to the local people. This makes sure that tourists can now feel good about themselves as supporting consumers of helpless indigenous people.

However, indigenous people are not only victims of outside pressures from the contemporary dominating neoliberal capitalist system; through indigenous modernities, they can also use the values and ideas created in this system for their own benefit, even to increase their indigenous identity. They can use them to construct an indigenisation of modernity, in which they acquire their own cultural space in the dominant political economy. Today, there are Bushmen who think in a more business-like manner when it suits them or who want to apply national (formal) law instead of traditional law, or who want to open a bank account for their monthly salary because it means they do not have to share it with family members. Such examples show a continuously changing life-world, which does not automatically mean that the modern takes over the traditional, but simply that values of modernisation are integrated into indigenous Bushmen communities, just as rifles, cars, cement houses, and cell phones have been. Therefore, 'indigenous modernities' are material *and* immaterial. Today, values such as democracy, human rights, national law, profit maximisation, marketing, and entrepreneurialism have become influences and ideas in the daily life of the Bushmen of Namibia and they exercise agency in their complex negotiations with external agents and forces.

In cultural ecotourism, Bushmen are still portrayed as the authentic people who know nature best, but who are not yet modern and therefore still in need of development. This image can be heavily criticised, and up to a degree it should be and it is, but it is also an immaterial indigenous modernity that is claimed by the Bushmen themselves when it suits them. From an indigenous perspective, it makes sense to claim it because it will increase one's possibilities in neoliberal capitalism. Whether it is true or not that (s)he really *is* 'the best ecologist' does not matter; it is *the idea* that (s)he is the best ecologist that matters and that can now be regarded as a commodity that the Bushmen can use to their advantage.

## Notes

- 1 I am aware of the contentious character of the term 'indigenous' (see, for example, Bétéille 1998; Kuper 2003), but that discussion goes beyond the scope of this chapter.
- 2 The Ju/'hoansi in the previous example are in fact a sub-group of the !Xun (see e.g. Barnard 1992: 39–40), so also here the !Xun are regarded as the 'real', 'pure', or more 'authentic' Bushmen.

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